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Housekeepers' Chat

Thurs., Nov., 24/27

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)



Subject: "On the Bargain Counter." Information about Fruit Cakes from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture.

Note: I have prepared a rather light program for today, since it is probable that a good many stations will not care to broadcast "informational material" on a holiday.

--"Aunt Sammy"

--ooOoo--

The other day I went to call on the Recipe Lady. She sat in her laboratory kitchen, looking very scientific, in a festive sort of way. She was weighing out raisins, and currants, and citron, and chopped nuts.

"Fruit-cake," I said to myself, in a Sherlock Holmes tone of voice. But never a word did I say aloud, until all the fruit was weighed, and measured.

Then I asked a question: "Please tell me," I asked, "why you are testing a Fruit Cake recipe, when there is already a good recipe in the Radio Cookbook?"

"Aunt Sammy," said my friend, "you must never be satisfied with a recipe, until you are sure it is as nearly perfect as you can make it. Perhaps, by testing this one again, I can make it even better than the one broadcast last year."

"If you do that," I said, "it will be a splendid recipe, indeed. By the way, did you ever develop a recipe which you thought was perfect?"

The Recipe Lady shook her head, slowly. "Aunt Sammy," said she, "I have never developed a recipe which I thought could not be improved upon."

That is exactly what she said. And that, after giving me all the wonderful recipes which I have been broadcasting. The Recipe Lady almost makes me feel embarrassed, sometimes. She is so careful with her cookery experiments, and has set herself such a high standard. Quite frequently she makes the same product, six or seven times, before she is satisfied with the result. That is why her recipes are so trustworthy -- you may be sure they have been tested and re-tested, before they are broadcast.

We fell to talking about Fruit Cakes, and I told her that I intended to devote one program to Fruit Cakes, and so forth, next week.

"That's fine," said the Recipe Lady. "Be sure to tell your listeners that there are three main points to remember, in making a fruit cake. First, the fruit must be carefully cleaned and prepared; second, the fruit must be well covered with flour, so it will be scattered through the cake, and not settle to the bottom; and third, the cake must be mixed and baked so that it will not be

soggy.

"There's another item that some of your listeners may not know -- when to frost a fruit cake, and how to keep a fruit cake, for some time. Fruit cakes should not be frosted until just before serving, because the white frosting is likely to loosen, and become discolored, as the fruit cake is stored."

"Now, as to keeping a fruit cake. After it is entirely cold, wrap it in waxed paper, or parchment paper, and place it in a tight container. Some persons like to put in with the cake an apple, cut in half, or a piece of cheesecloth, saturated with cider. Look at the cake, from time to time, to see that no mold is appearing."

"Thank you very much," said I, "but you must not tell me any more facts about fruit cakes now, or I'll broadcast them before December, and that will spoil my Fruit Cake program. By the way," I said, "are you giving out samples of your fruit cake to a select list of friends?"

"Surely", said the Recipe Lady, "call around some time next week, Aunt Sammy."

I took leave of her then, so that she might make her cake, undisturbed.

When I got home, I was still meditating on her remark, that she had never developed a recipe that couldn't be improved upon. I really must be more careful myself, after this.

Do you know the little verse called "The Spice Box?" It was written for people like --, well, for people who put too much guesswork in their cooking. This is the verse:

"I guessed the pepper; the soup was too hot!
I guessed the water; it dried in the pot!
I guessed the salt; and -- what do you think?
We did nothing else, the whole day, but drink!"

Speaking of recipes, I found an ancient one the other day, in an old, old English cookbook. I do not have the date of the cookbook, but I think it must have been printed many, many years ago. I'm going to quote you the recipe for a meat dish, just to show you how much we women have to be thankful for. Please do not write this recipe, with the intention of using it. Here's the recipe:
(Read slowly)

"Take hens and pork, and seethe them together; take the liver of hens, and pork, and hew it small, and grinde it all to dust; take bread grated, and do put it thereto, and temper it with the self broth, and bind it together, with yelks of eggs, and cast thereon powder fort; boil it, and look that it be not stonding" which means stiff.

That's all of the recipe. Isn't it a curious one? For instance, "take hens and pork". Well, how many hens, and how much pork? Then the recipe says: "Take the liver of hens". But it does not specify how many livers. Just imagine that company should arrive unexpectedly on Sunday morning, and we had to

prepare a dish of "hens and pork", by this old recipe. While the guests were chatting in the parlor, wondering when they would eat, we might be chasing hens in the barn yard, and cutting up livers, and "grinding it all to dust."

I must show this recipe to the Recipe Lady. It ought to convince her that some progress has been made, in the line of cookery.

Since this is Thanksgiving day, I shall not broadcast recipes. I'm sure you are in no mood to "take pencil and paper," and write down ingredients, today.

However, this is a good day to answer one or two questions which have been on hand for some time.

First question: "What is allspice made of?"

Allspice is the dried, unripe berry of an evergreen tree. After the berries are picked, they are exposed to the sun for a period of from 7 to 12 days. Allspice has the same flavor as a mixture of cinnamon, nutmeg, and clove. That is why it is called "allspice."

Second question: "I should like to know why there is sometimes a white coating on the nutmeg we buy."

Answer: The white coating on nutmegs comes from an application of lime. When the nutmegs are dried, and removed from their shells, they are apt to be attacked by insects. To prevent this, they are usually dipped in a strong solution of lime, which gives them a whitish appearance, and keeps them indefinitely.

Third question: "Do spices have any particular use in the diet?"

Answer: Spices and condiments do not add to the nutritive value of food, but they do add a pleasant flavor. Highly seasoned foods overstimulate the flow of digestive juices. Therefore, spices should be used sparingly, in quantities just sufficient to give a pleasant flavor.

No more questions today. Tomorrow's program contains a great deal of important information, on a subject that concerns every woman who runs a household.

